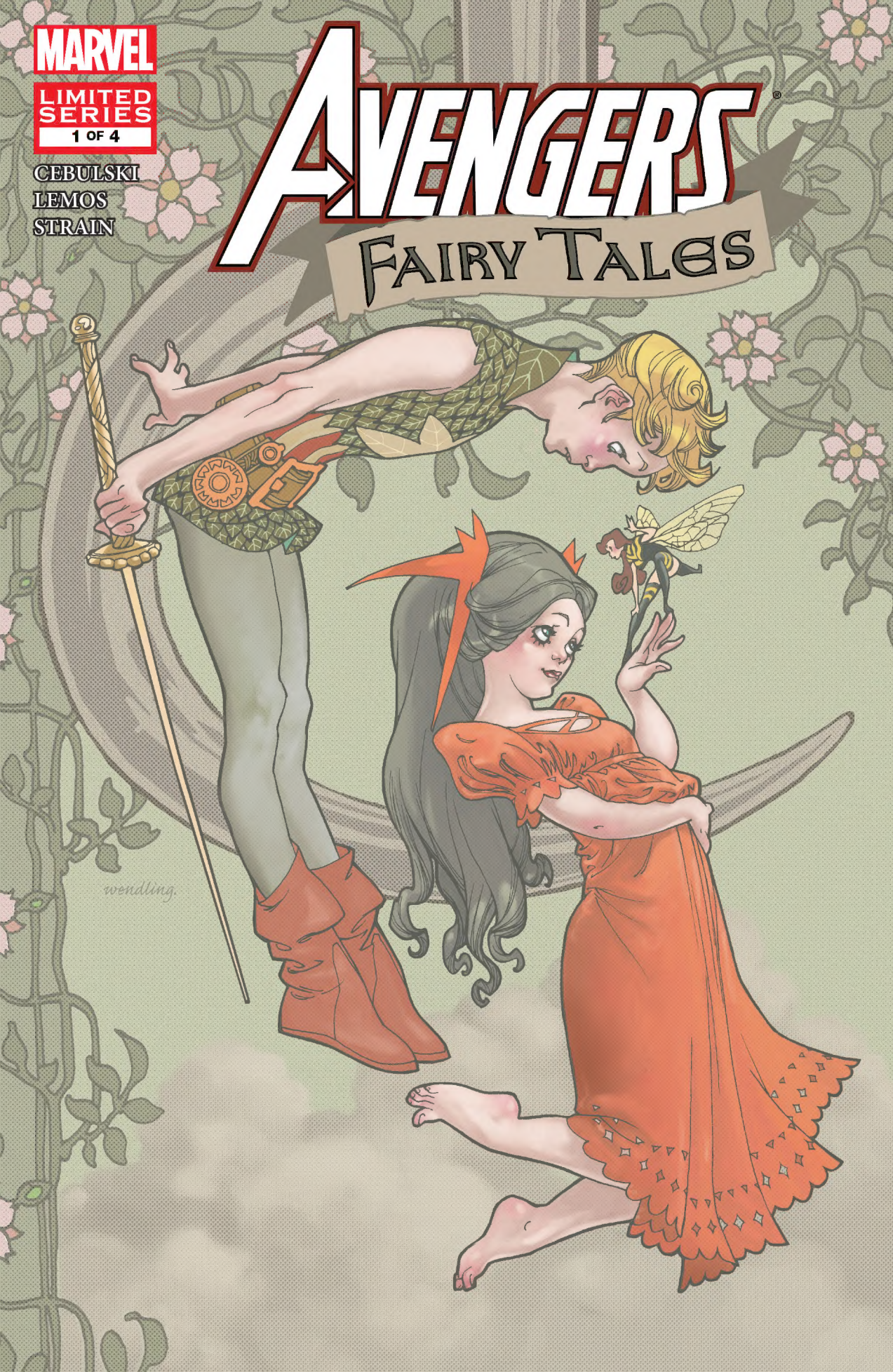
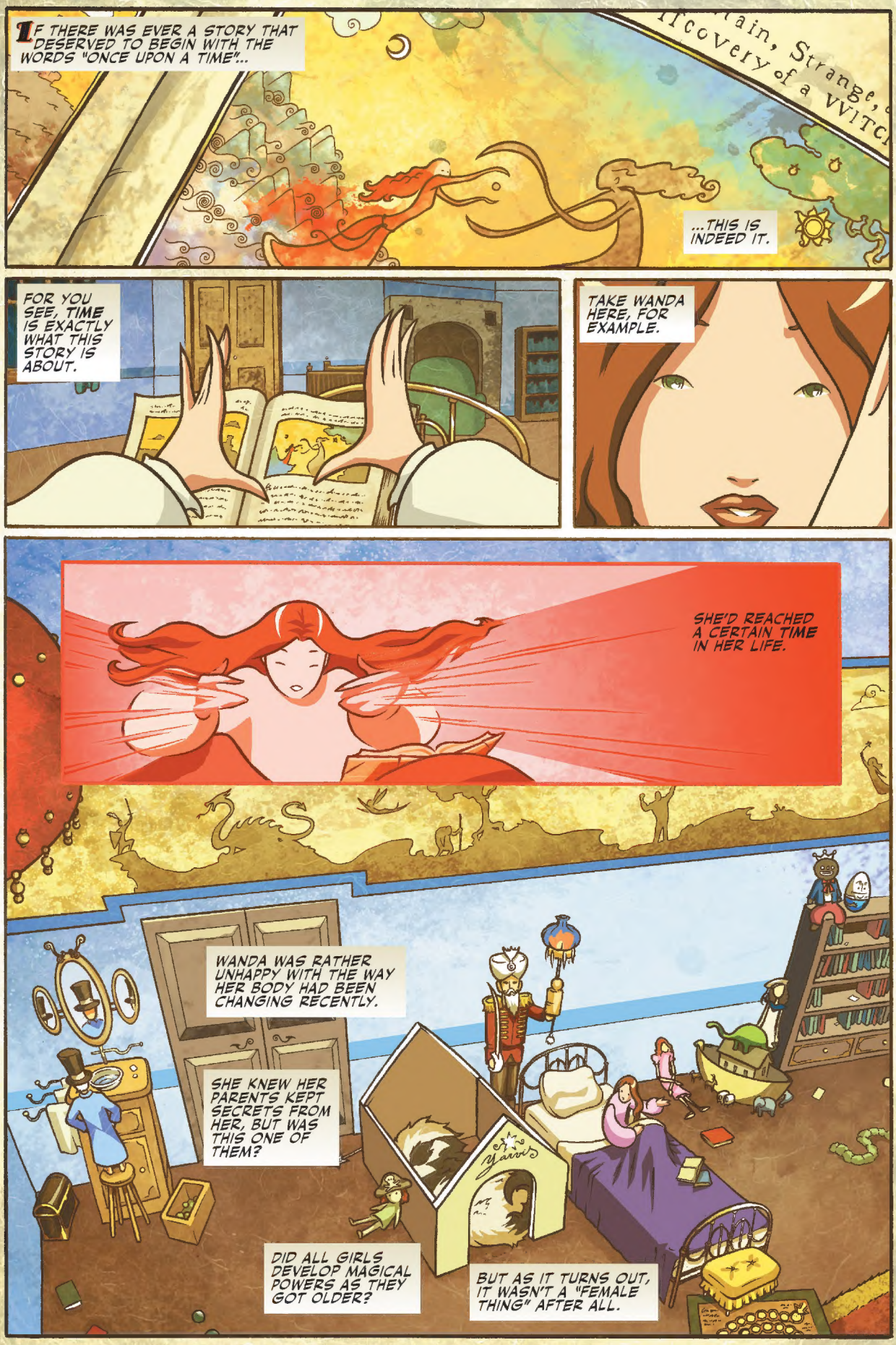
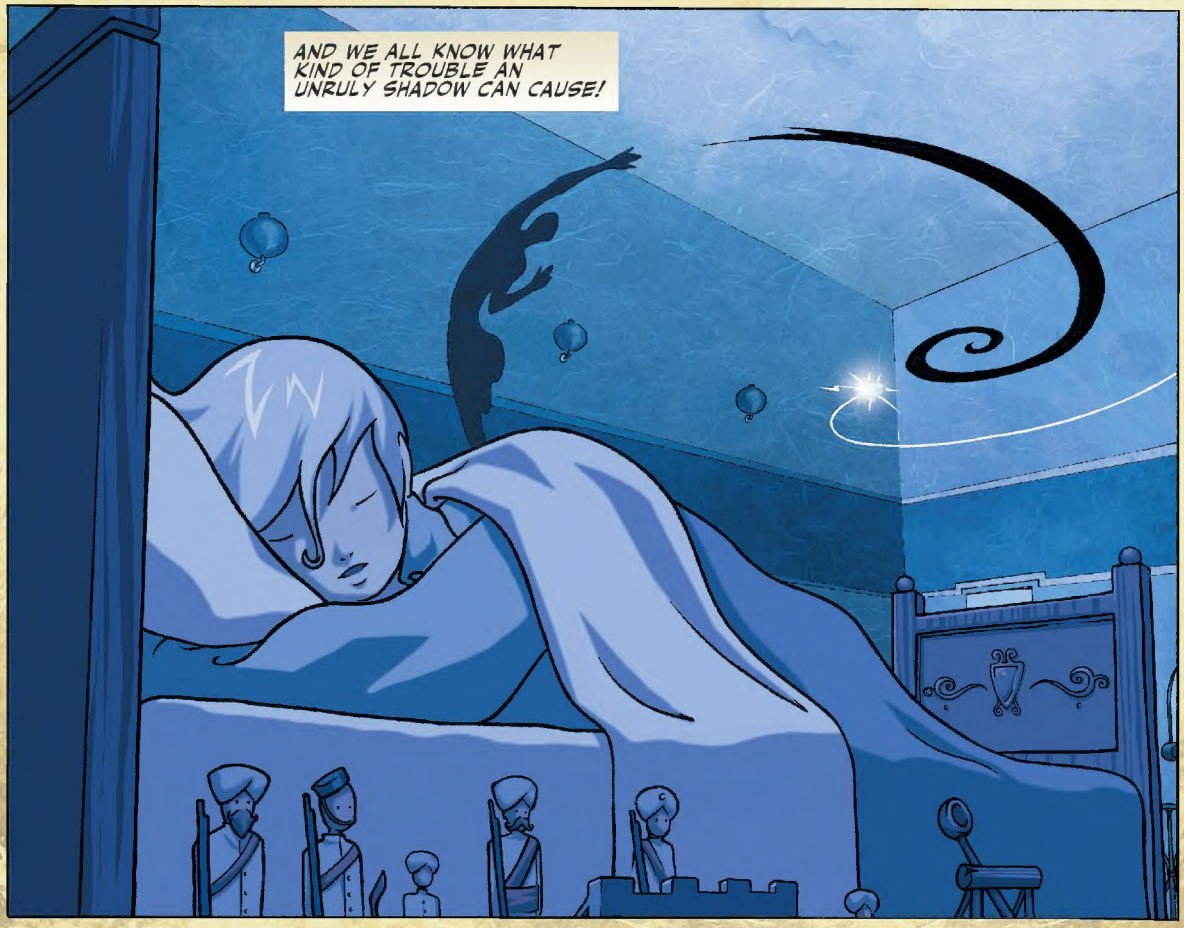

MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
1 OF 4
CEBULSKI
LEMOS
STRAIN
AVENGERS
FAIRY TALES
wendling.

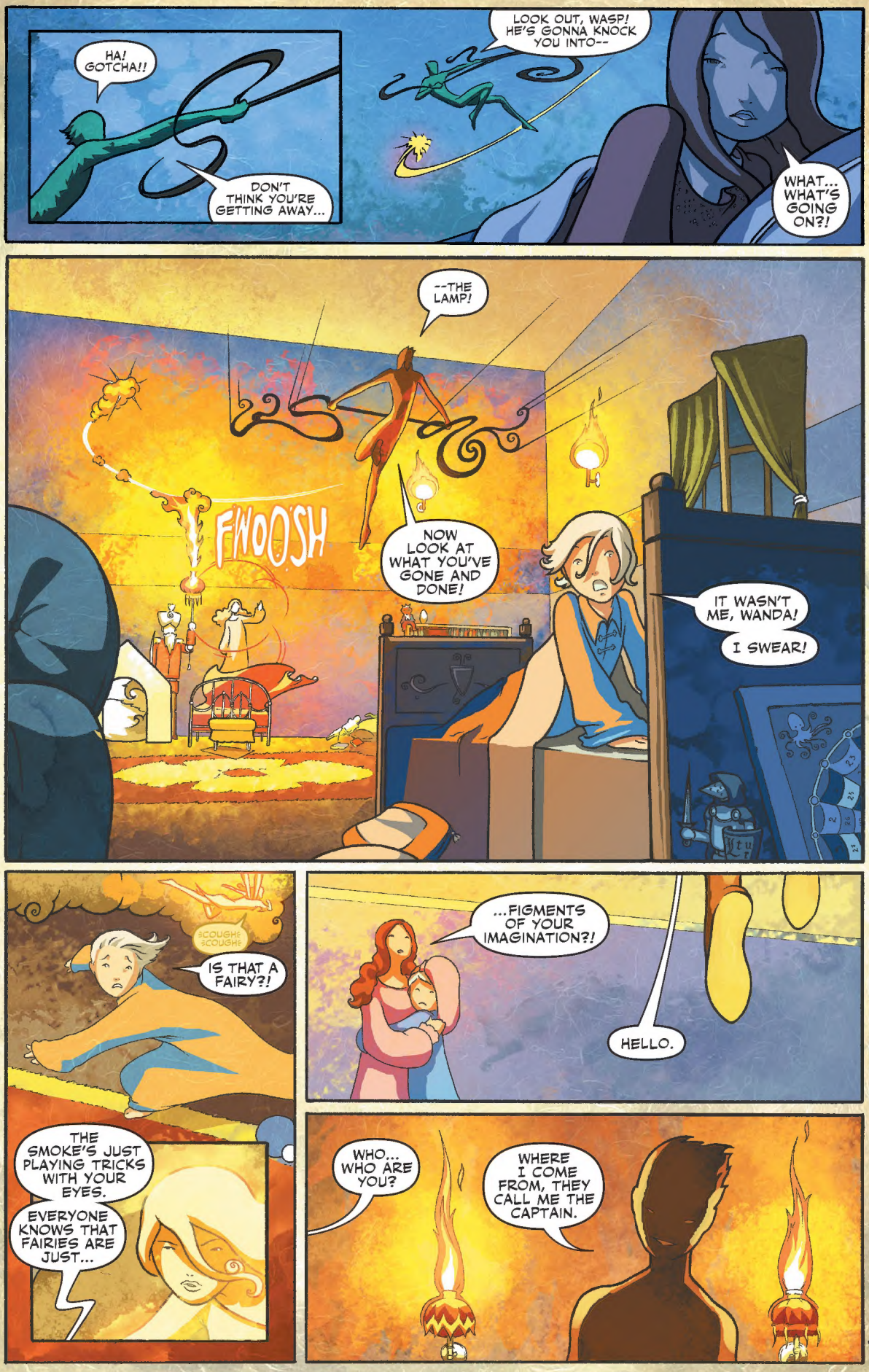

IF THERE WAS EVER A STORY THAT DESERVED TO BEGIN WITH THE WORDS "ONCE UPON A TIME"...
...THIS IS INDEED IT.
FOR YOU SEE, TIME IS EXACTLY WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT.
TAKE WANDA HERE, FOR EXAMPLE.
SHE'D REACHED A CERTAIN TIME IN HER LIFE.
WANDA WAS RATHER UNHAPPY WITH THE WAY HER BODY HAD BEEN CHANGING RECENTLY.
SHE KNEW HER PARENTS KEPT SECRETS FROM HER, BUT WAS THIS ONE OF THEM?
DID ALL GIRLS DEVELOP MAGICAL POWERS AS THEY GOT OLDER?
BUT AS IT TURNS OUT, IT WASN'T A "FEMALE THING" AFTER ALL.

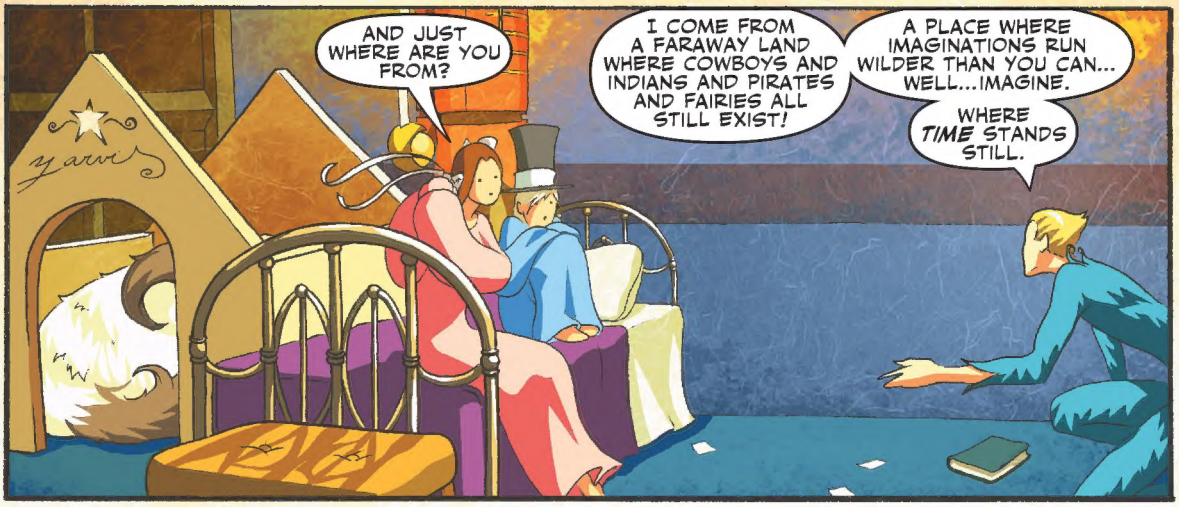
SOMETHING SIMILAR WAS HAPPENING WITH HER BROTHER.
BUT WHILE WANDA'S POWERS EXHAUSTED HER...
...THE PROBLEM WITH PIETRO WAS THAT HE JUST COULDN'T SLOW DOWN.
IT WAS AS IF TIME STOOD STILL AROUND HIM.
SPEAKING OF WHICH...
SHORTLY AFTER BEDTIME...

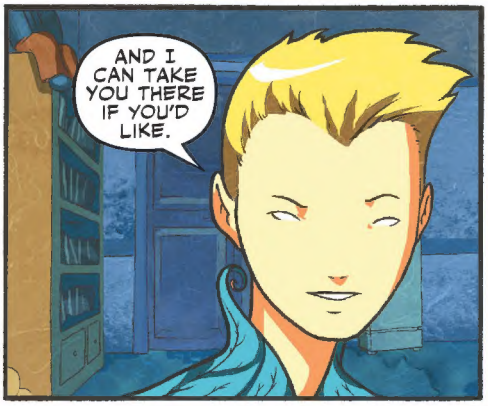
...OUR SLUMBERING SIBLINGS WERE VISITED BY A PAIR OF STEALTHY STRANGERS...

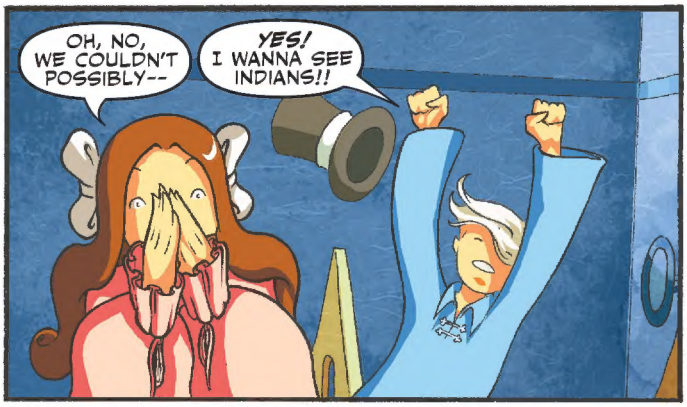
...ONE OF WHOM SEEMED TO BE HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME CONTROLLING HIS SHADOW.

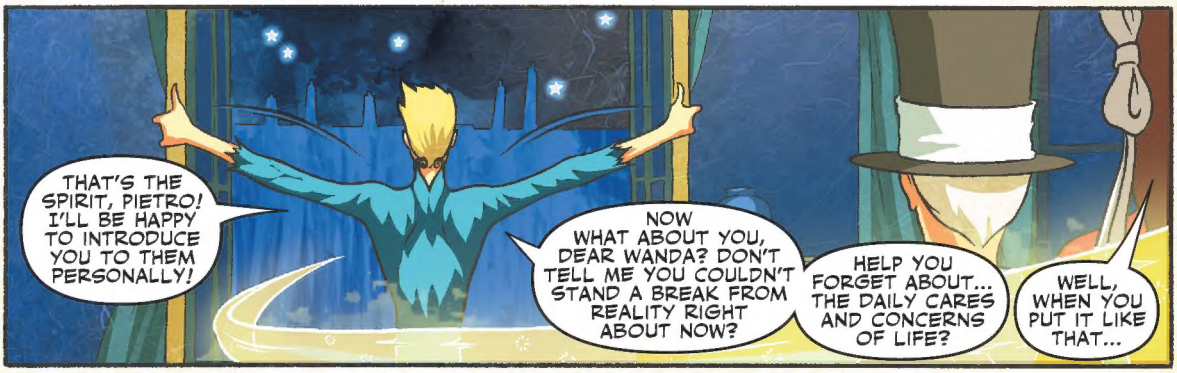

AND WE ALL KNOW WHAT KIND OF TROUBLE AN UNRULY SHADOW CAN CAUSE!

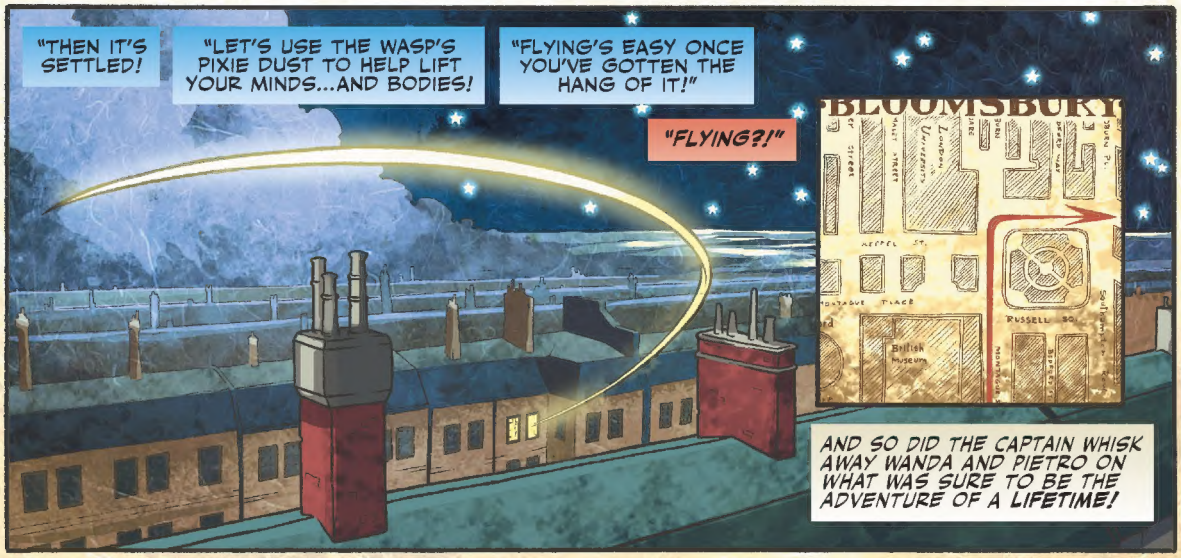

HA! GOTCHA!!
DON'T THINK YOU'RE GETTING AWAY...
LOOK OUT, WASP! HE'S GONNA KNOCK YOU INTO--
WHAT... WHAT'S GOING ON?!
--THE LAMP!
FWOOSH
NOW LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE GONE AND DONE!
IT WASN'T ME, WANDA!
I SWEAR!
COUGH! COUGH!
IS THAT A FAIRY?!
THE SMOKE'S JUST PLAYING TRICKS WITH YOUR EYES.
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT FAIRIES ARE JUST...
...FIGMENTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION?!
HELLO.
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
WHERE I COME FROM, THEY CALL ME THE CAPTAIN.

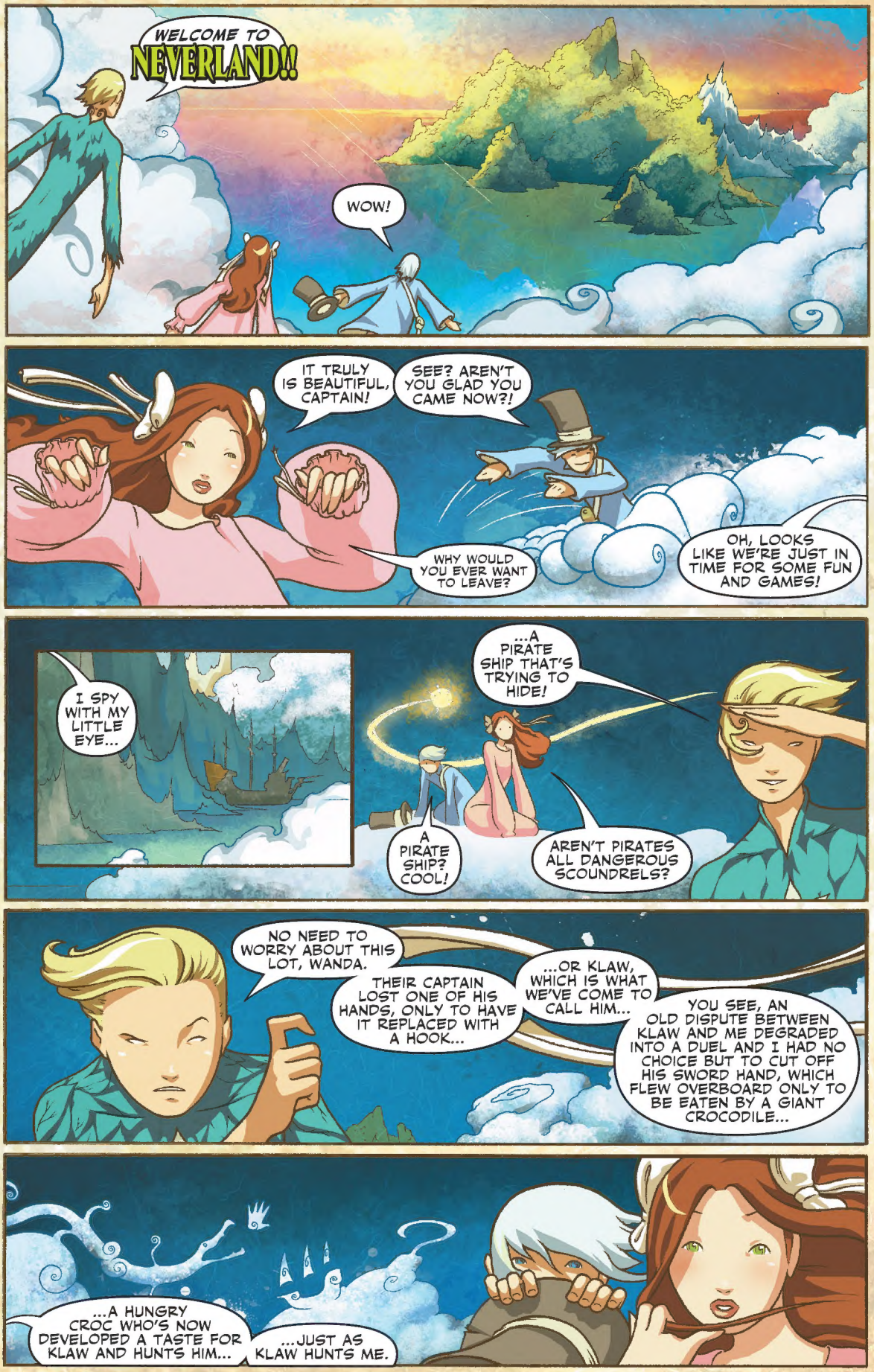

AND JUST WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
I COME FROM A FARAWAY LAND WHERE COWBOYS AND INDIANS AND PIRATES AND FAIRIES ALL STILL EXIST!
A PLACE WHERE IMAGINATIONS RUN WILDER THAN YOU CAN... WELL...IMAGINE.
WHERE *TIME* STANDS STILL.

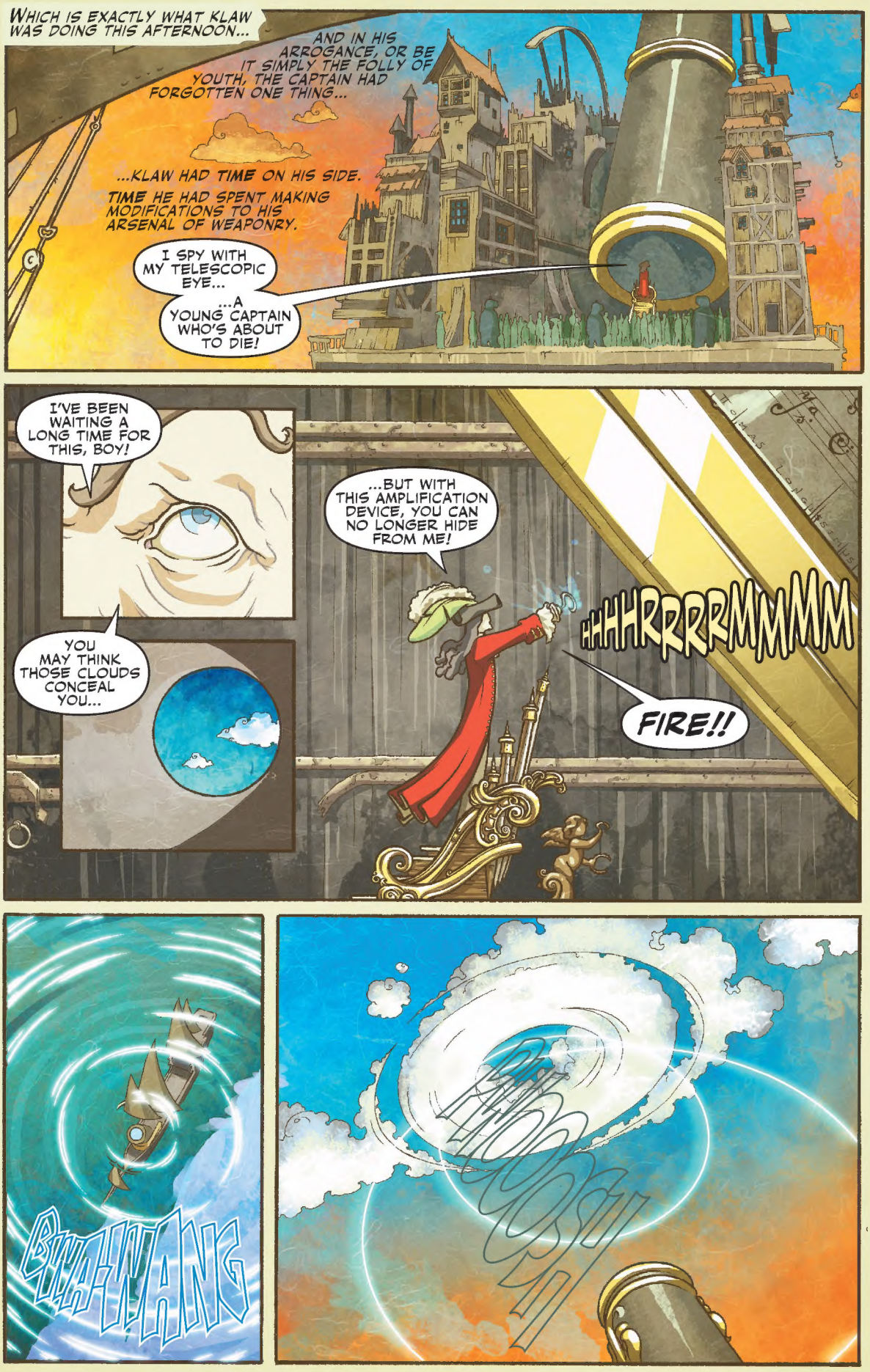

AND I CAN TAKE YOU THERE IF YOU'D LIKE.

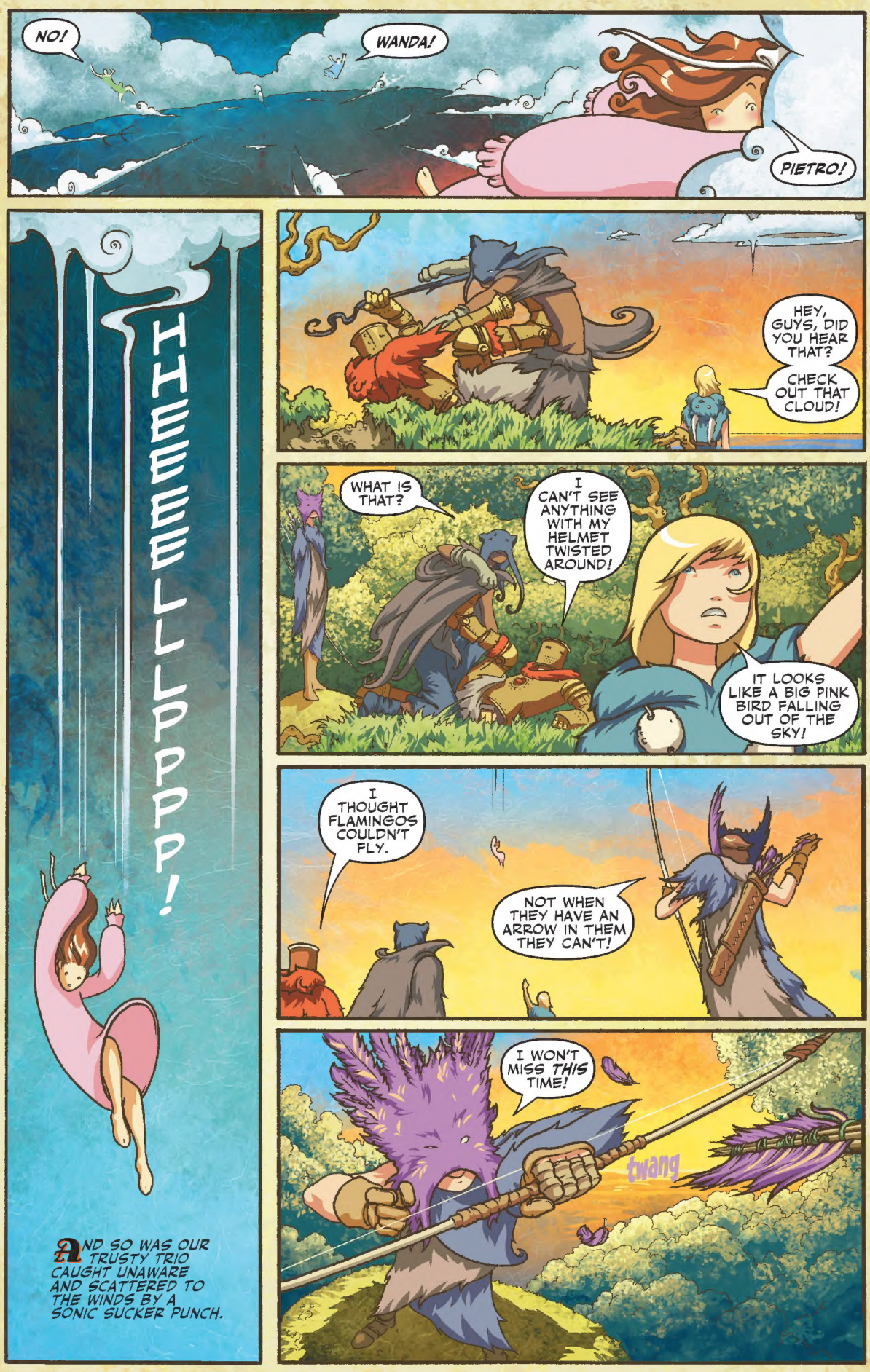

OH, NO, WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY--
YES! I WANNA SEE INDIANS!!

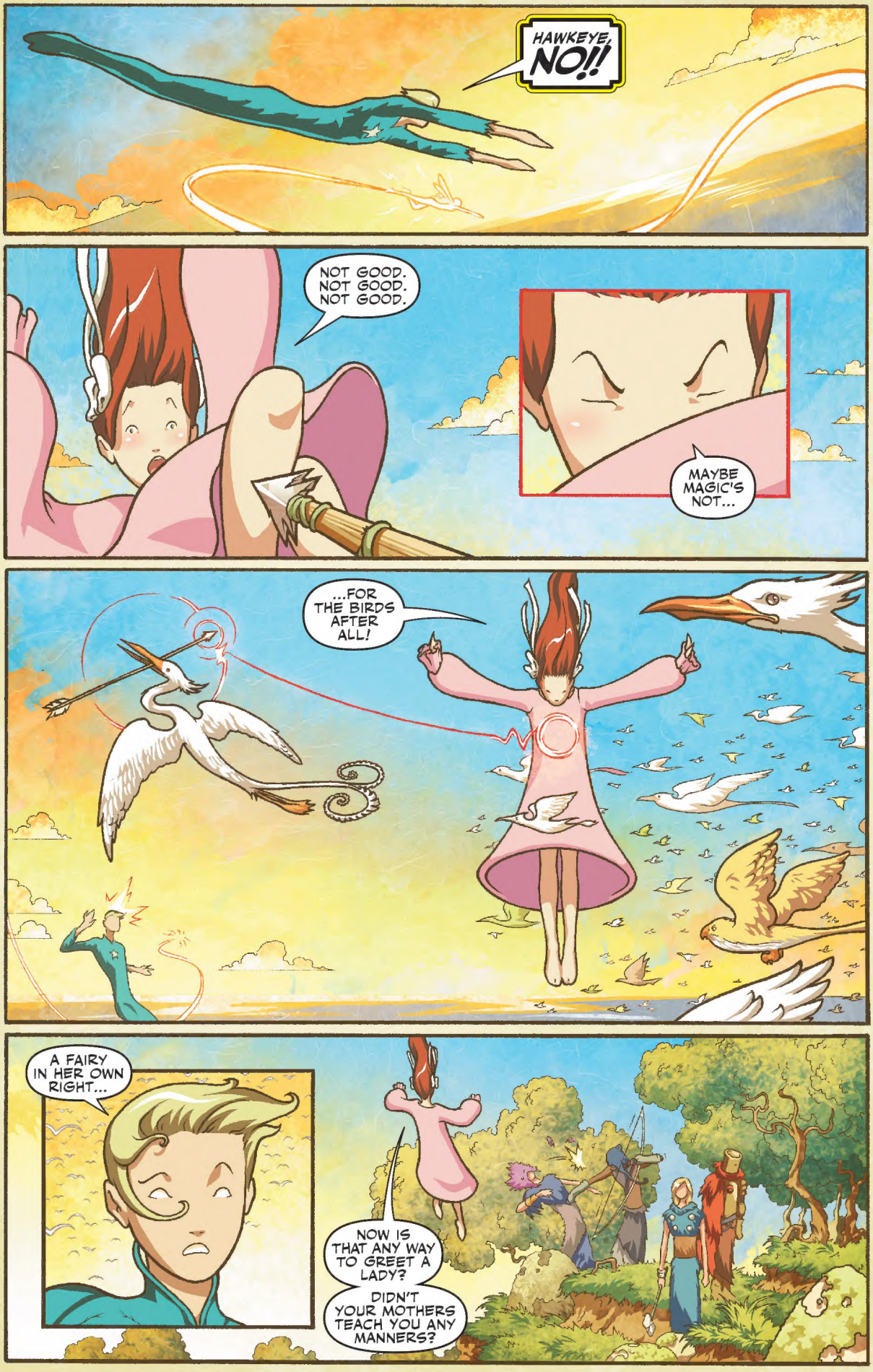

THAT'S THE SPIRIT, PIETRO! I'LL BE HAPPY TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THEM PERSONALLY!
NOW WHAT ABOUT YOU, DEAR WANDA? DON'T TELL ME YOU COULDN'T STAND A BREAK FROM REALITY RIGHT ABOUT NOW?
HELP YOU FORGET ABOUT... THE DAILY CARES AND CONCERNS OF LIFE?
WELL, WHEN YOU PUT IT LIKE THAT...

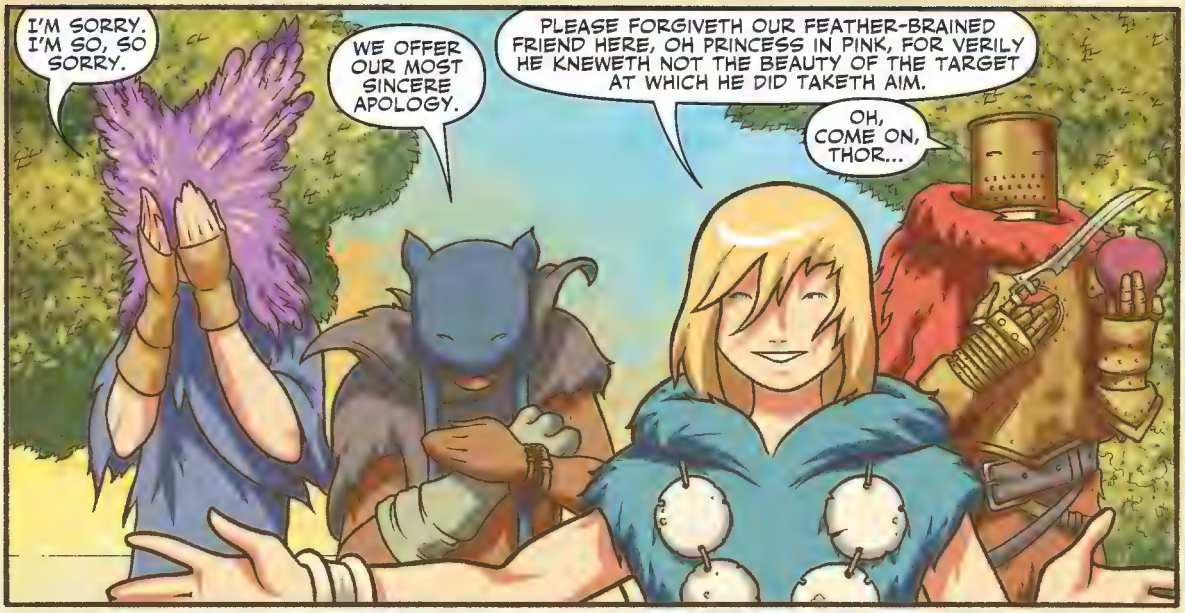

"THEN IT'S SETTLED!
"LET'S USE THE WASP'S PIXIE DUST TO HELP LIFT YOUR MINDS...AND BODIES!
"FLYING'S EASY ONCE YOU'VE GOTTEN THE HANG OF IT!"
"FLYING?!"
BLOOMSBURY
AND SO DID THE CAPTAIN WHISK AWAY WANDA AND PIETRO ON WHAT WAS SURE TO BE THE ADVENTURE OF A *LIFETIME!*

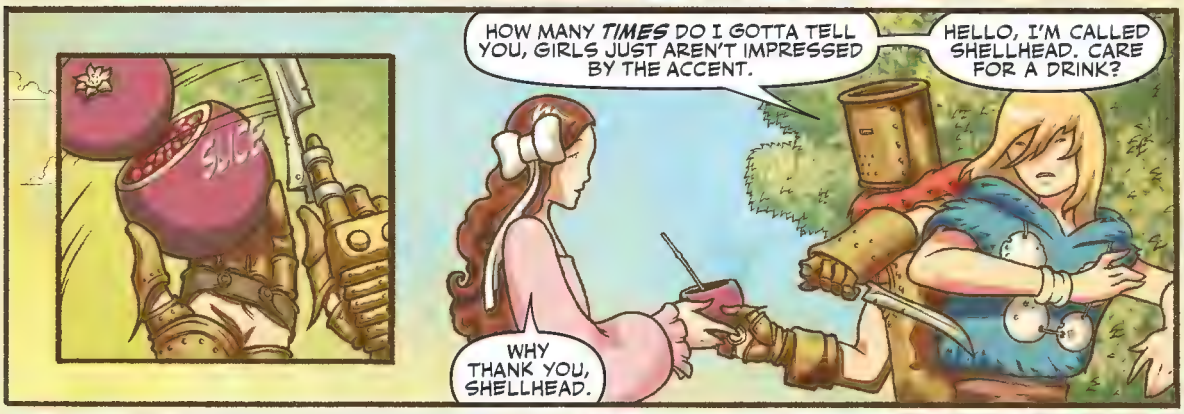

WELCOME TO NEVERLAND!!
WOW!
IT TRULY IS BEAUTIFUL, CAPTAIN!
SEE? AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU CAME NOW?!
WHY WOULD YOU EVER WANT TO LEAVE?
OH, LOOKS LIKE WE'RE JUST IN TIME FOR SOME FUN AND GAMES!
I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE...
...A PIRATE SHIP THAT'S TRYING TO HIDE!
A PIRATE SHIP? COOL!
AREN'T PIRATES ALL DANGEROUS SCOUNDRELS?
NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THIS LOT, WANDA.
THEIR CAPTAIN LOST ONE OF HIS HANDS, ONLY TO HAVE IT REPLACED WITH A HOOK...
...OR KLAW, WHICH IS WHAT WE'VE COME TO CALL HIM...
YOU SEE, AN OLD DISPUTE BETWEEN KLAW AND ME DEGRADED INTO A DUEL AND I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO CUT OFF HIS SWORD HAND, WHICH FLEW OVERBOARD ONLY TO BE EATEN BY A GIANT CROCODILE...
...A HUNGRY CROC WHO'S NOW DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR KLAW AND HUNTS HIM...
...JUST AS KLAW HUNTS ME.


WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT KLAW WAS DOING THIS AFTERNOON...
AND IN HIS ARROGANCE, OR BE IT SIMPLY THE FOLLY OF YOUTH, THE CAPTAIN HAD FORGOTTEN ONE THING...
...KLAW HAD TIME ON HIS SIDE.
TIME HE HAD SPENT MAKING MODIFICATIONS TO HIS ARSENAL OF WEAPONRY.
I SPY WITH MY TELESCOPIC EYE...
...A YOUNG CAPTAIN WHO'S ABOUT TO DIE!
I'VE BEEN WAITING A LONG TIME FOR THIS, BOY!
YOU MAY THINK THOSE CLOUDS CONCEAL YOU...
...BUT WITH THIS AMPLIFICATION DEVICE, YOU CAN NO LONGER HIDE FROM ME!
HHHRRRRMMMMM
FIRE!!
BWAHANG
WHOOSH

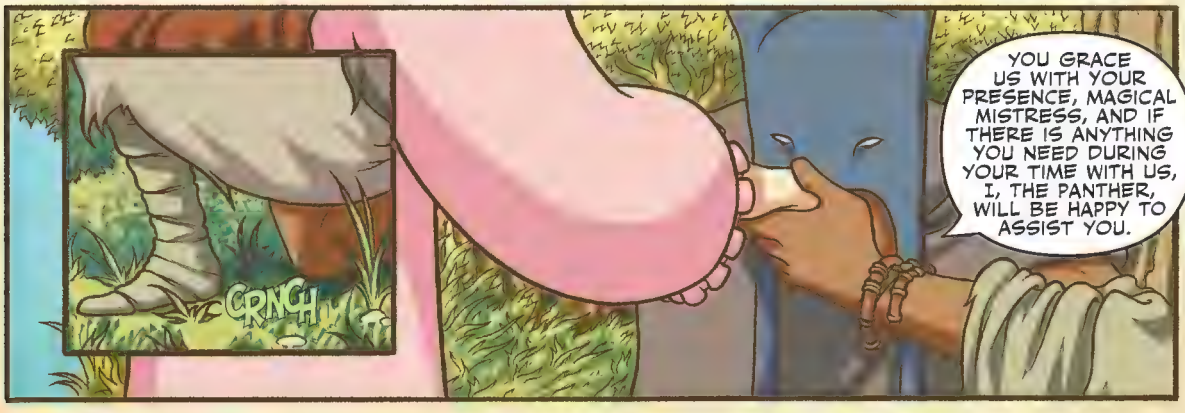

NO!
WANDA!
PIETRO!
HHEEEELLLPPP!
HEY, GUYS, DID YOU HEAR THAT?
CHECK OUT THAT CLOUD!
WHAT IS THAT?
I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING WITH MY HELMET TWISTED AROUND!
IT LOOKS LIKE A BIG PINK BIRD FALLING OUT OF THE SKY!
I THOUGHT FLAMINGOS COULDN'T FLY.
NOT WHEN THEY HAVE AN ARROW IN THEM THEY CAN'T!
I WON'T MISS THIS TIME!
twang
AND SO WAS OUR TRUSTY TRIO CAUGHT UNAWARE AND SCATTERED TO THE WINDS BY A SONIC SUCKER PUNCH.


HAWKEYE, NO!!
NOT GOOD. NOT GOOD. NOT GOOD.
MAYBE MAGIC'S NOT...
...FOR THE BIRDS AFTER ALL!
A FAIRY IN HER OWN RIGHT...
NOW IS THAT ANY WAY TO GREET A LADY?
DIDN'T YOUR MOTHERS TEACH YOU ANY MANNERS?

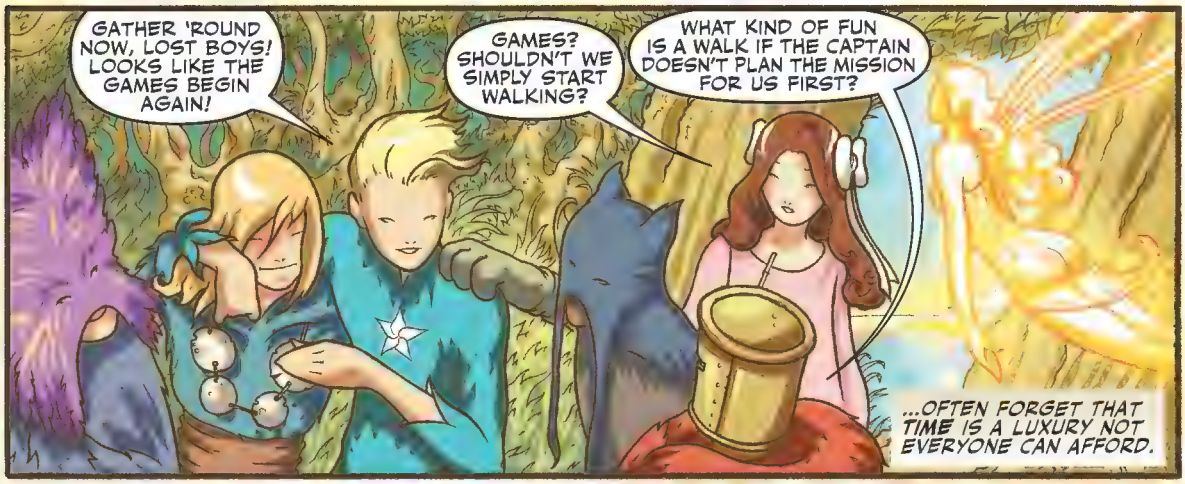

I'M SORRY. I'M SO, SO SORRY.
WE OFFER OUR MOST SINCERE APOLOGY.
PLEASE FORGIVETH OUR FEATHER-BRAINED FRIEND HERE, OH PRINCESS IN PINK, FOR VERILY HE KNEWETH NOT THE BEAUTY OF THE TARGET AT WHICH HE DID TAKETH AIM.
OH, COME ON, THOR...


SLICE
HOW MANY *TIMES* DO I GOTTA TELL YOU, GIRLS JUST AREN'T IMPRESSED BY THE ACCENT.
HELLO, I'M CALLED SHELLHEAD. CARE FOR A DRINK?
WHY THANK YOU, SHELLHEAD.

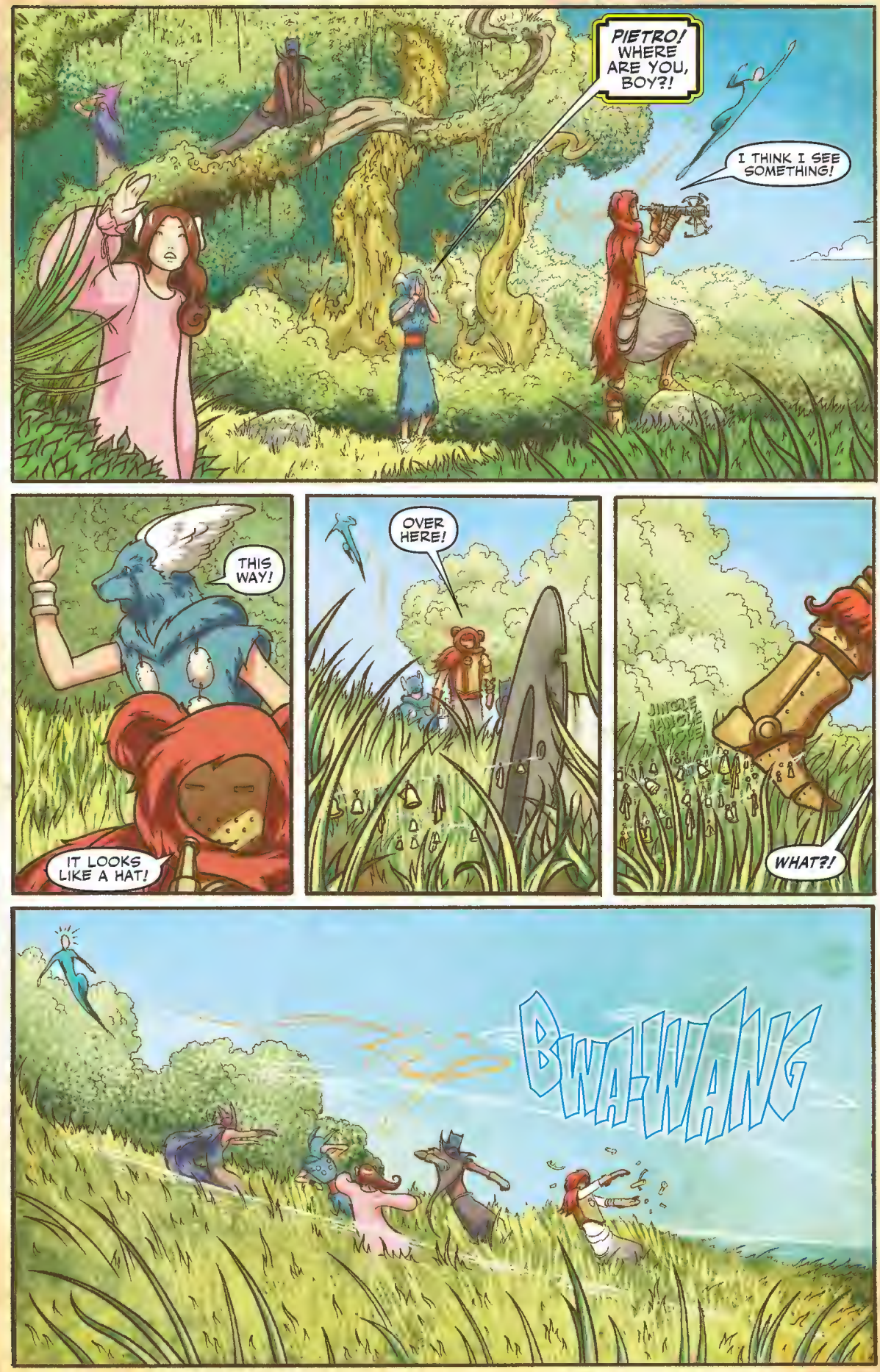
TAP TAP
I REALLY AM SORRY ABOUT THAT ARROW AND ALL.
I WOULDN'T HAVE FIRED IF I KNEW YOU WERE A LADY.
I GO BY HAWK, BY THE WAY.
APOLOGY ACCEPTED, HAWK.

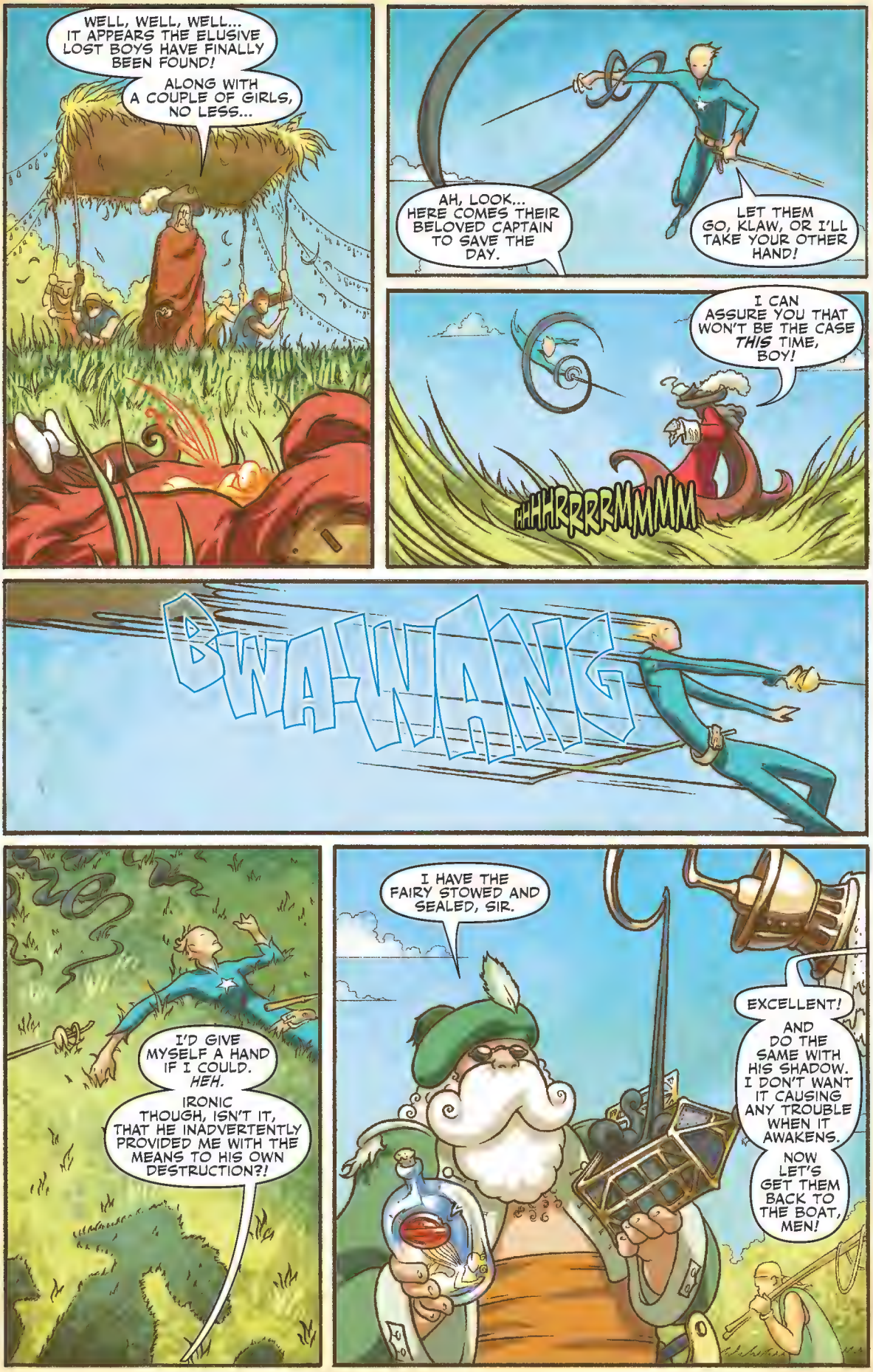

CRNCH
YOU GRACE US WITH YOUR PRESENCE, MAGICAL MISTRESS, AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING YOU NEED DURING YOUR TIME WITH US, I, THE PANTHER, WILL BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU.

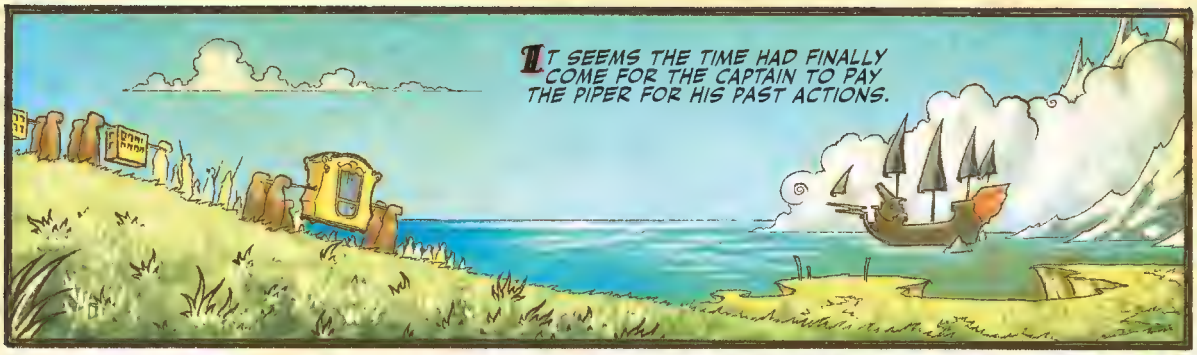
THANK YOU EVER SO MUCH.
AND SINCE YOU'VE OFFERED, I BELIEVE I WILL NEED YOUR HELP IN FINDING MY BROTHER, PIETRO, WHO ALSO FELL--
NOT TO WORRY, WANDA. THE WONDROUS WASP SAYS SHE SAW PIETRO LAND JUST OVER THAT RIDGE.
WHICH WAS ALL WELL AND GOOD, BUT AS WANDA QUICKLY DISCOVERED, BOYS WHO NEVER GROW UP...

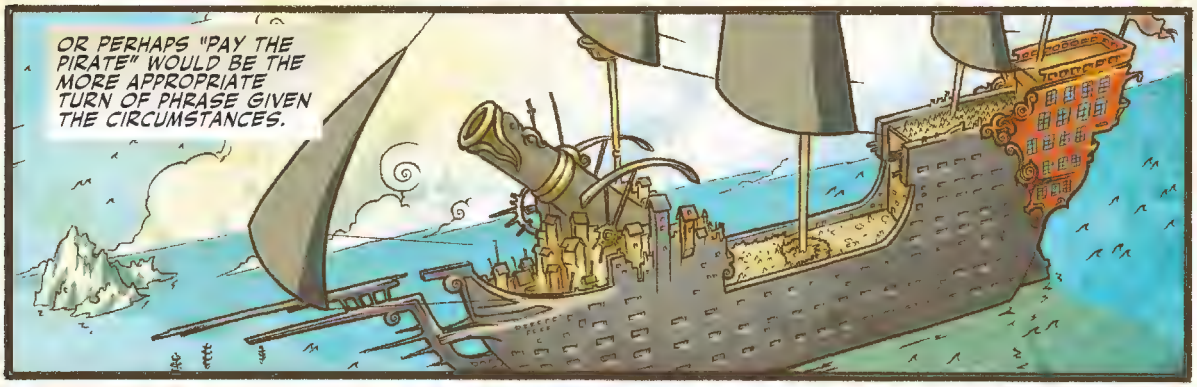

GATHER 'ROUND NOW, LOST BOYS! LOOKS LIKE THE GAMES BEGIN AGAIN!
GAMES? SHOULDN'T WE SIMPLY START WALKING?
WHAT KIND OF FUN IS A WALK IF THE CAPTAIN DOESN'T PLAN THE MISSION FOR US FIRST?
...OFTEN FORGET THAT TIME IS A LUXURY NOT EVERYONE CAN AFFORD.

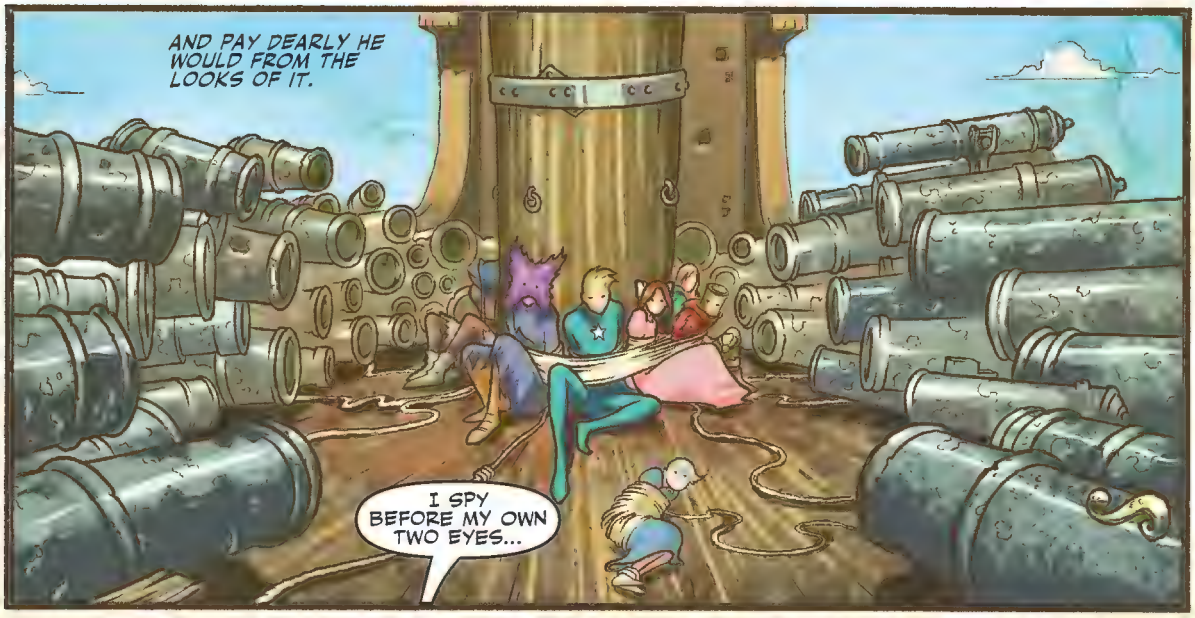
AND UNFORTUNATELY FOR PIETRO...
...HIS TIME APPEARED TO BE RUNNING OUT.
WE MAY HAVE MISSED THE BIG FISH, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT US SOME BAIT, BOYS!


PIETRO! WHERE ARE YOU, BOY?!
I THINK I SEE SOMETHING!
THIS WAY!
IT LOOKS LIKE A HAT!
OVER HERE!
JUNGLE JUNGLE JUNGLE
WHAT?!
BWA-WANG


WELL, WELL, WELL... IT APPEARS THE ELUSIVE LOST BOYS HAVE FINALLY BEEN FOUND!
ALONG WITH A COUPLE OF GIRLS, NO LESS...
AH, LOOK... HERE COMES THEIR BELOVED CAPTAIN TO SAVE THE DAY.
LET THEM GO, KLAW, OR I'LL TAKE YOUR OTHER HAND!
I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT WON'T BE THE CASE *THIS* TIME, BOY!
HHHRRRRMMMM
SWA-WANG
I'D GIVE MYSELF A HAND IF I COULD. *HEH.*
IRONIC THOUGH, ISN'T IT, THAT HE INADVERTENTLY PROVIDED ME WITH THE MEANS TO HIS OWN DESTRUCTION?!
I HAVE THE FAIRY STOWED AND SEALED, SIR.
EXCELLENT!
AND DO THE SAME WITH HIS SHADOW. I DON'T WANT IT CAUSING ANY TROUBLE WHEN IT AWAKENS.
NOW LET'S GET THEM BACK TO THE BOAT, MEN!

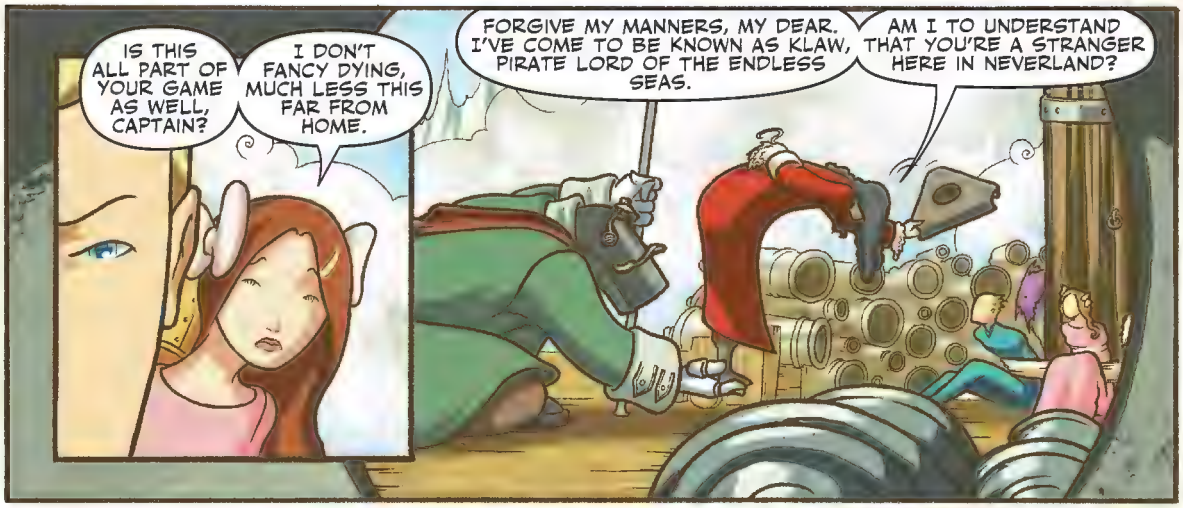

It seems the time had finally come for the captain to pay the piper for his past actions.

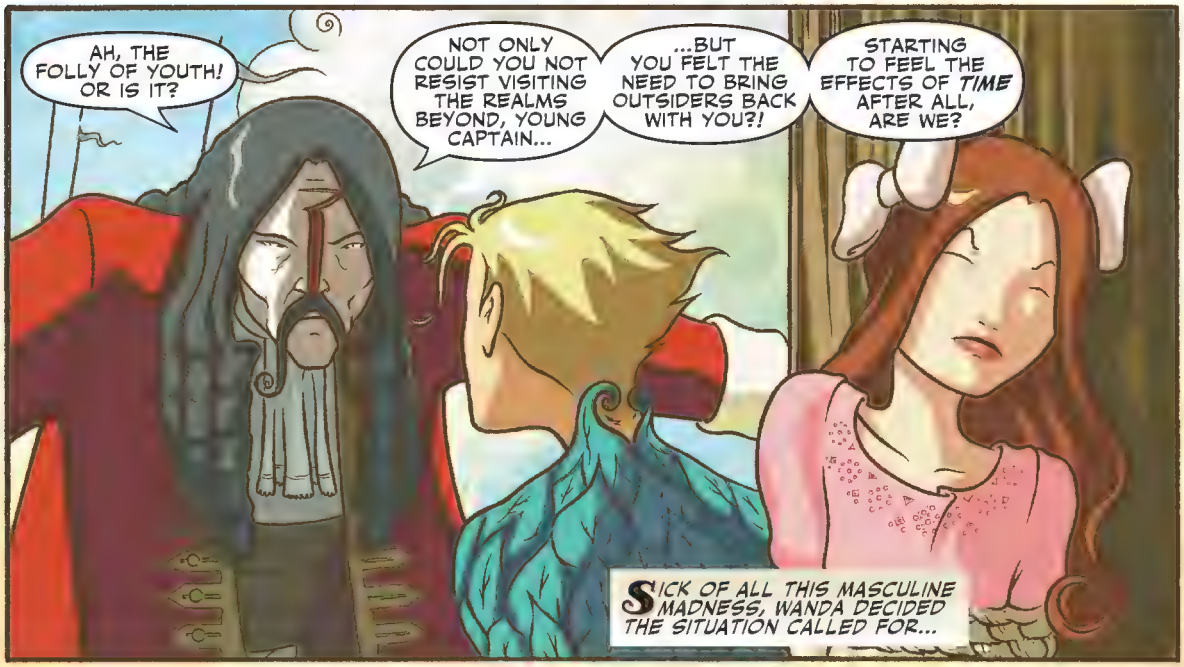

Or perhaps "pay the pirate" would be the more appropriate turn of phrase given the circumstances.

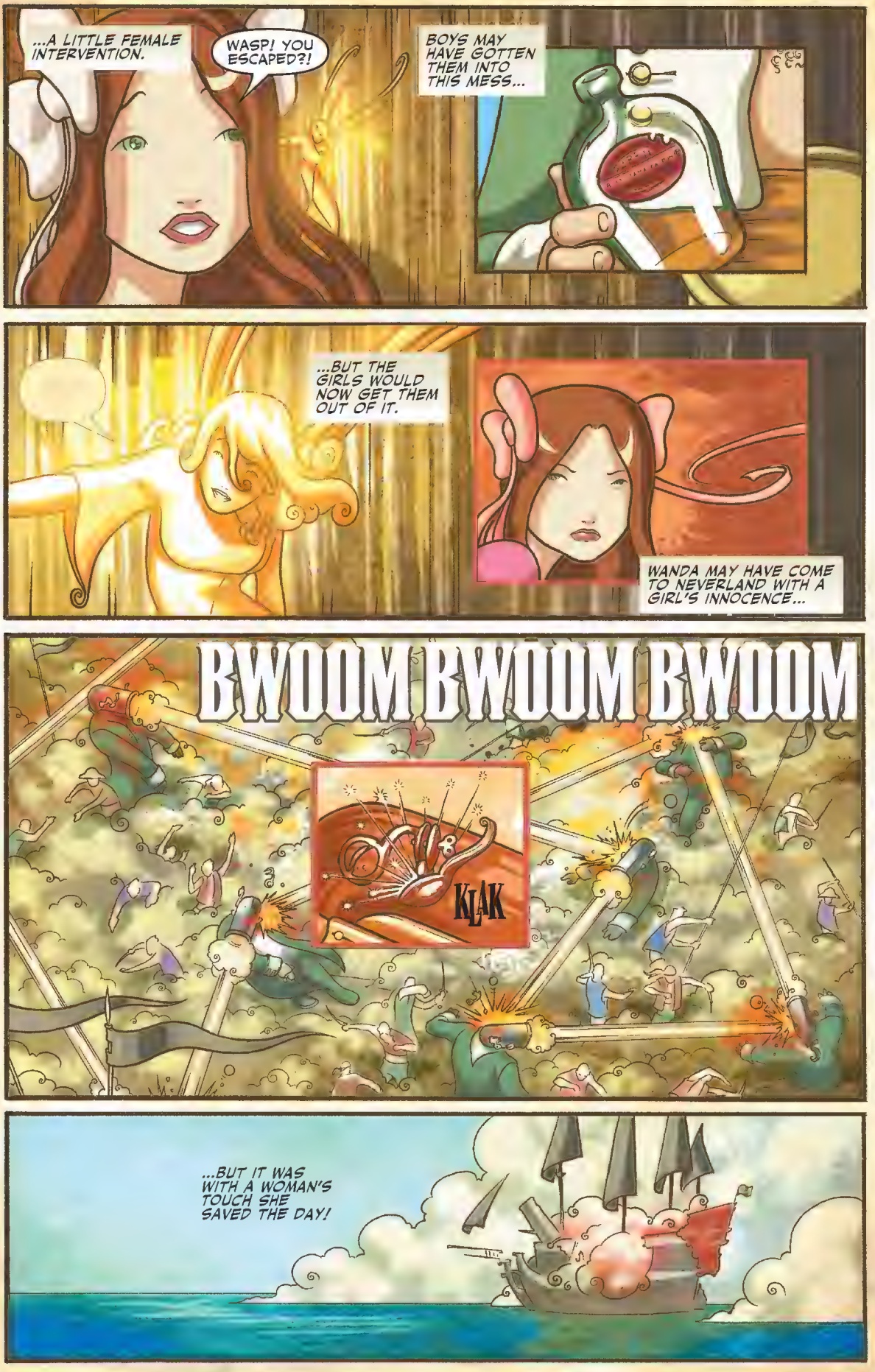

And pay dearly he would from the looks of it.
I spy before my own two eyes...

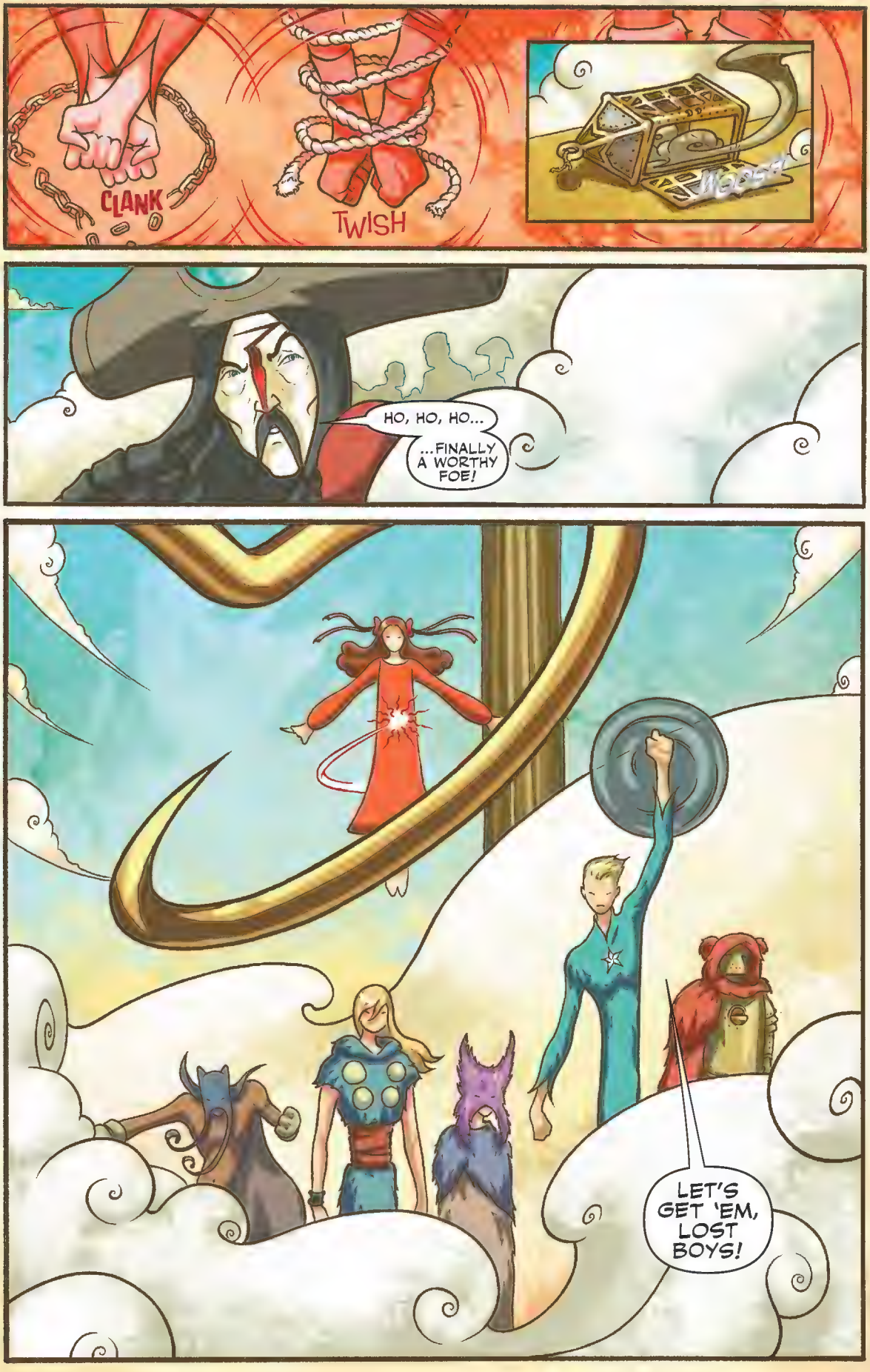
...a boy and his friends about to meet their demise.

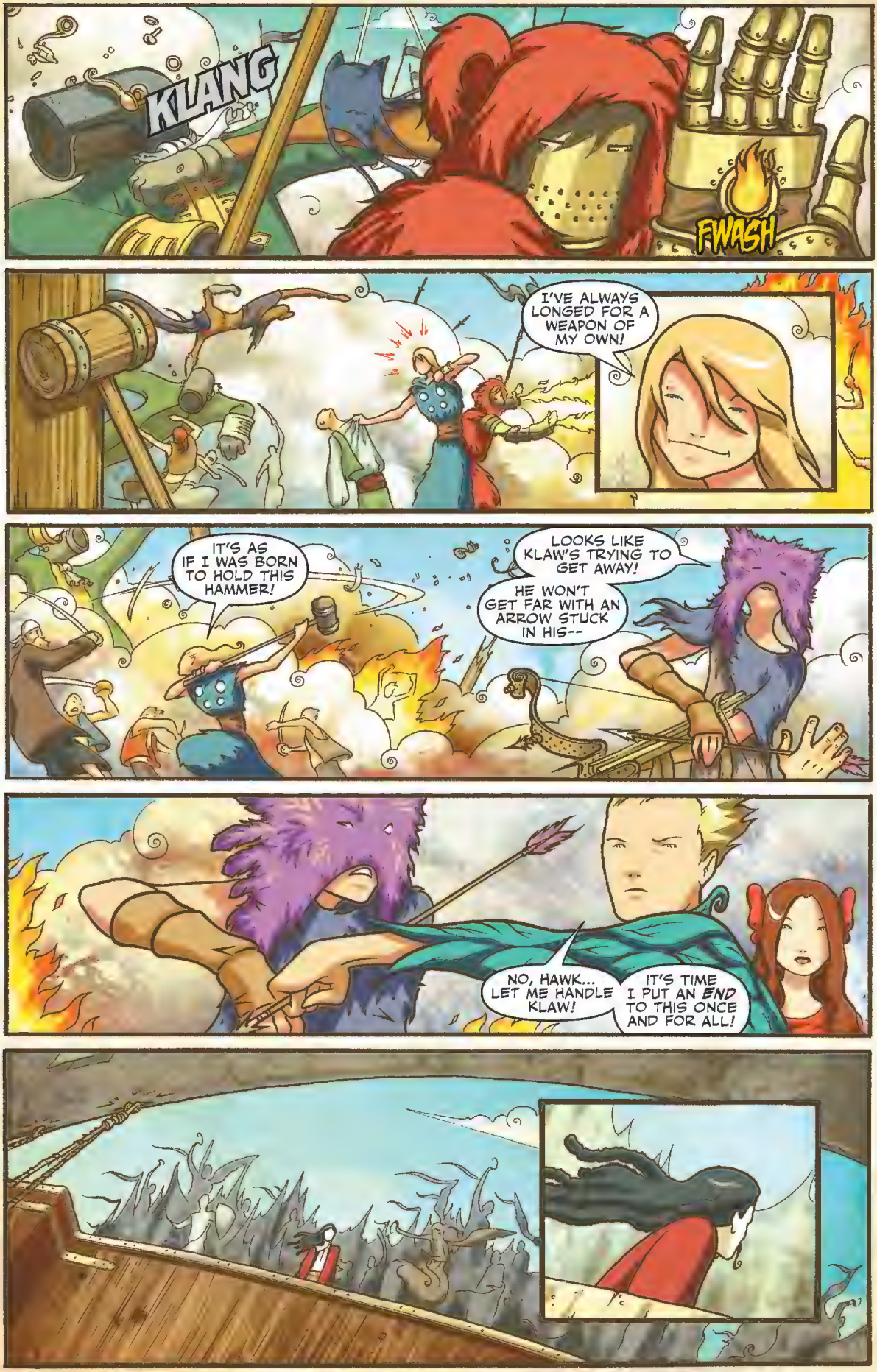
WELCOME TO THE JOLLY ROGER!
WE RAISE OUR SWORDS IN YOUR HONOR, MOST NOBLE ENEMIES! LONG HAVE YOU ELUDED US.
BUT WITH YOUR DEATHS TODAY, THIS CHAPTER IN OUR LIVES WILL FINALLY COME TO ITS CLOSE.


IS THIS ALL PART OF YOUR GAME AS WELL, CAPTAIN?
I DON'T FANCY DYING, MUCH LESS THIS FAR FROM HOME.
FORGIVE MY MANNERS, MY DEAR. I'VE COME TO BE KNOWN AS KLAW, PIRATE LORD OF THE ENDLESS SEAS.
AM I TO UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE A STRANGER HERE IN NEVERLAND?


AH, THE FOLLY OF YOUTH! OR IS IT?
NOT ONLY COULD YOU NOT RESIST VISITING THE REALMS BEYOND, YOUNG CAPTAIN...
...BUT YOU FELT THE NEED TO BRING OUTSIDERS BACK WITH YOU?!
STARTING TO FEEL THE EFFECTS OF *TIME* AFTER ALL, ARE WE?
SICK OF ALL THIS MASCULINE MADNESS, WANDA DECIDED THE SITUATION CALLED FOR...


...A LITTLE FEMALE INTERVENTION.
WASP! YOU ESCAPED?!
BOYS MAY HAVE GOTTEN THEM INTO THIS MESS...
...BUT THE GIRLS WOULD NOW GET THEM OUT OF IT.
WANDA MAY HAVE COME TO NEVERLAND WITH A GIRL'S INNOCENCE...
BWOOM BWOOM BWOOM
KLAK
...BUT IT WAS WITH A WOMAN'S TOUCH SHE SAVED THE DAY!


CLANK
TWISH
WOOSH
HO, HO, HO...
...FINALLY A WORTHY FOE!
LET'S GET 'EM, LOST BOYS!

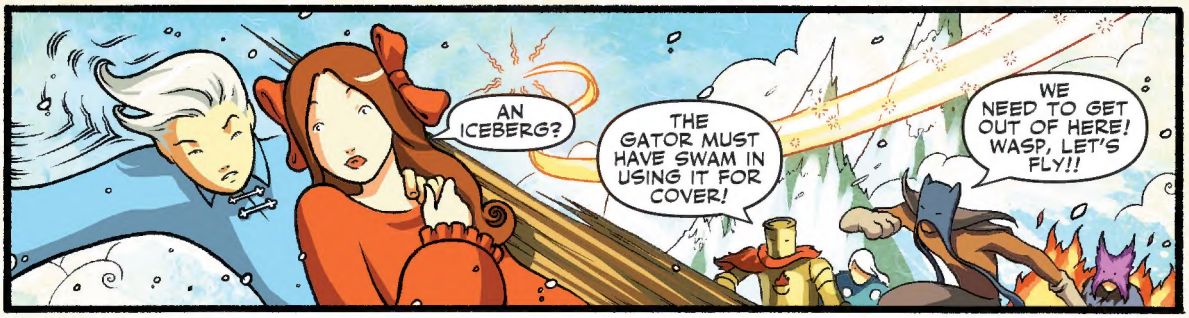

KLANG
FWASH
I'VE ALWAYS LONGED FOR A WEAPON OF MY OWN!
IT'S AS IF I WAS BORN TO HOLD THIS HAMMER!
LOOKS LIKE KLAW'S TRYING TO GET AWAY!
HE WON'T GET FAR WITH AN ARROW STUCK IN HIS--
NO, HAWK... LET ME HANDLE KLAW!
IT'S TIME I PUT AN *END* TO THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL!

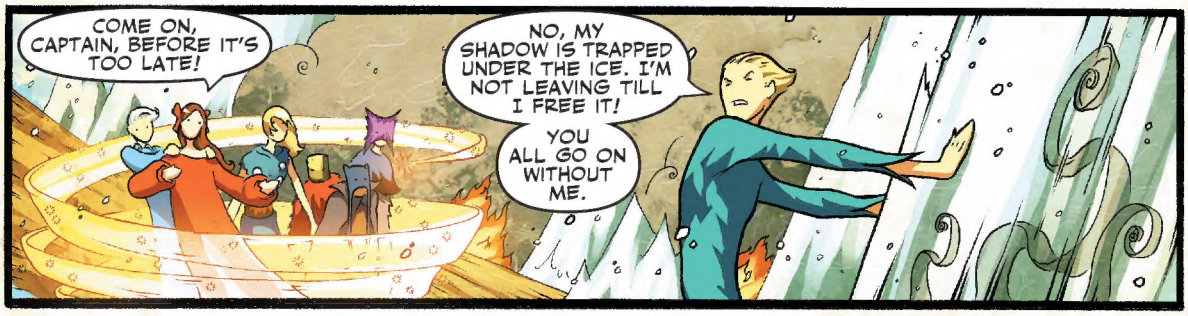
TIME WE PUT AN END TO IT.
THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL.
WHAT ARE THEY?
THEY'RE KLAW'S FRIENDS. HIS FAMILY.
BUT THEY'RE NOT REAL. I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
WHEN YOU'RE UNAFFECTED BY TIME'S PASSAGE, IT'S EASY TO BECOME DISCONNECTED FROM LIFE.
SOMETIMES YOU LOOK FOR NEW WAYS TO ENTERTAIN YOURSELF... OR FIND SOMEONE TO TALK TO...OR ANYTHING TO JUST REMIND YOU YOU'RE ALIVE.
IS THAT WHY YOU BROUGHT PIETRO AND ME HERE?

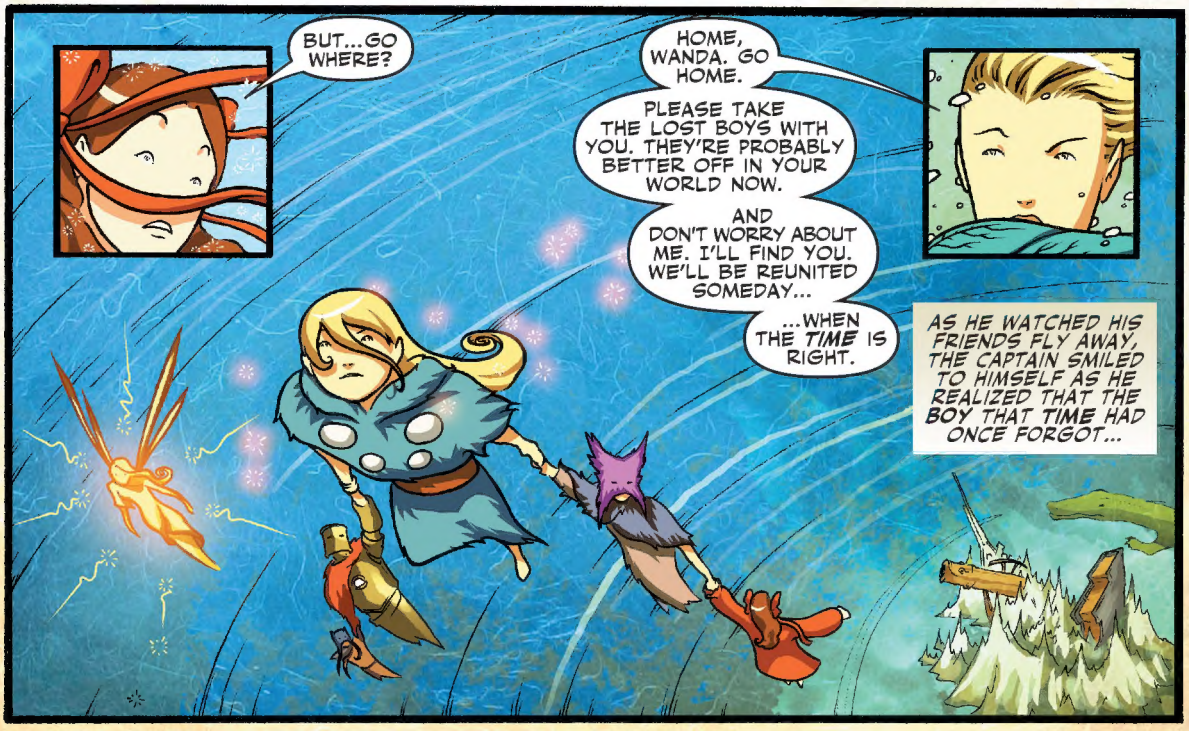
OF COURSE THAT'S WHY!
IT'S WHAT HE ALWAYS DOES... SELFISHLY THINK OF NO ONE BUT HIMSELF!
WANDA, LOOK OUT!
AAIIIIEEE!
UGGGGHH!
YOU'RE DESTROYING THE SHIP! YOU'LL KILL US ALL!
KRAAK
SO BE IT! I'LL SACRIFICE ANYTHING TO FINALLY HAVE MY REVENGE!
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

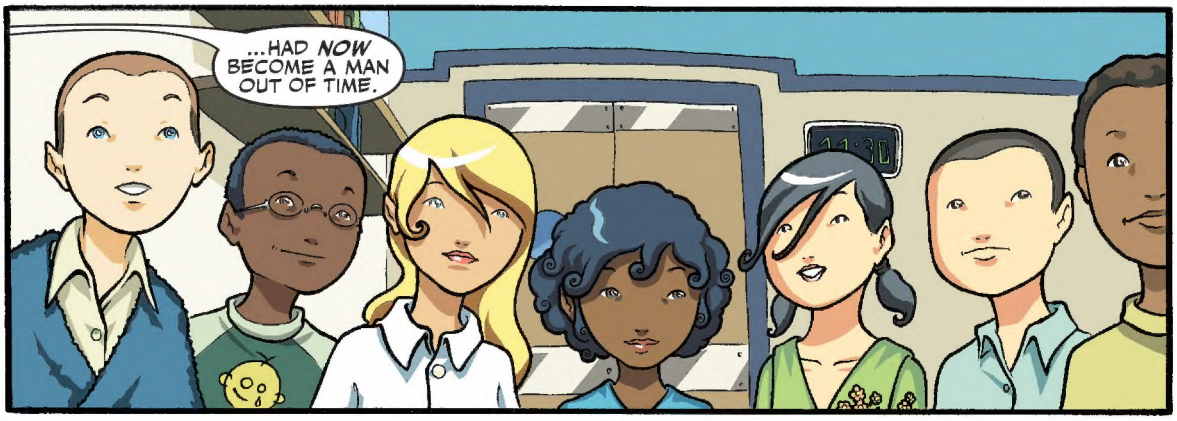
BUT WITH THE TICK TOCK OF A FAMILIAR CLOCK...
...KLAW TURNED TO FIND HIS TIME HAD FINALLY RUN OUT.
NO, IT CAN'T BE...! THE RINGING IN MY EARS MUST HAVE PREVENTED ME FROM HEARING--
KRAASH
THIS MAY BE THE END FOR ME...
...BUT HE'LL BE COMING FOR YOU NEXT, BOY!
HOLD ON TO ME!
KRNCH
YOU'RE LIVING ON BORROWED TIME NOW, CAPTAIN!

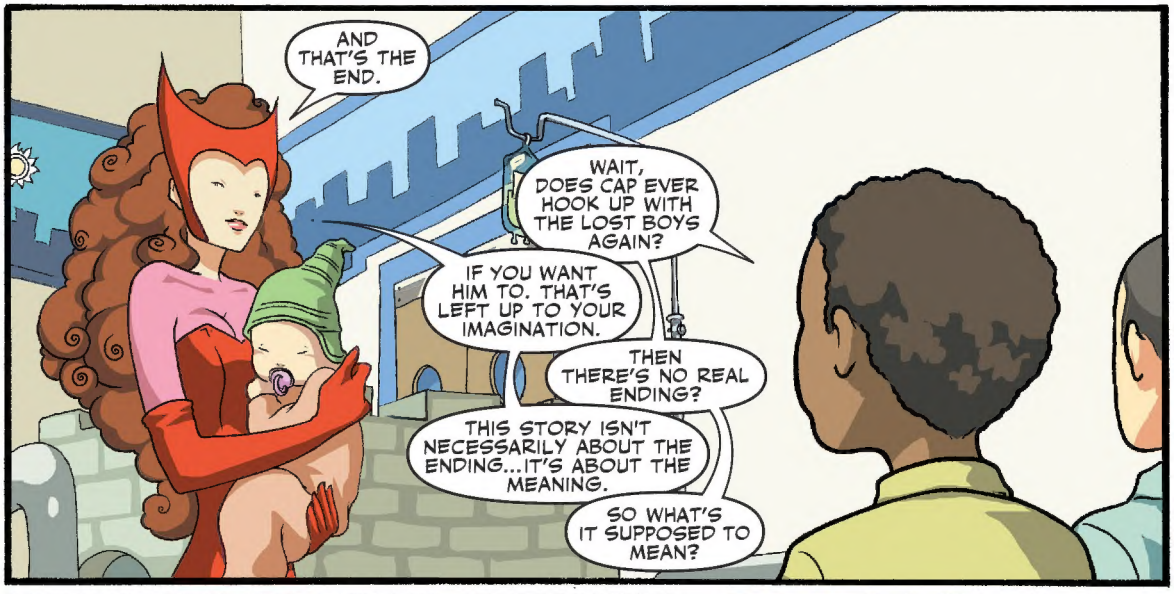
KKRRSSSHH
CHOMP


AN ICEBERG?
THE GATOR MUST HAVE SWAM IN USING IT FOR COVER!
WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE! WASP, LET'S FLY!!


COME ON, CAPTAIN, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
NO, MY SHADOW IS TRAPPED UNDER THE ICE. I'M NOT LEAVING TILL I FREE IT!
YOU ALL GO ON WITHOUT ME.


BUT...GO WHERE?
HOME, WANDA. GO HOME.
PLEASE TAKE THE LOST BOYS WITH YOU. THEY'RE PROBABLY BETTER OFF IN YOUR WORLD NOW.
AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I'LL FIND YOU. WE'LL BE REUNITED SOMEDAY...
...WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT.
AS HE WATCHED HIS FRIENDS FLY AWAY, THE CAPTAIN SMILED TO HIMSELF AS HE REALIZED THAT THE BOY THAT TIME HAD ONCE FORGOT...




AND THAT'S THE END.
WAIT, DOES CAP EVER HOOK UP WITH THE LOST BOYS AGAIN?
IF YOU WANT HIM TO. THAT'S LEFT UP TO YOUR IMAGINATION.
THEN THERE'S NO REAL ENDING?
THIS STORY ISN'T NECESSARILY ABOUT THE ENDING...IT'S ABOUT THE MEANING.
SO WHAT'S IT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

TO SOME, IT'S ABOUT TRYING TO FIND THE MAGIC IN YOUR LIFE.
TO OTHERS, IT'S ABOUT STANDING UP AND FACING YOUR FEARS.
TO MANY, IT'S ABOUT STAYING YOUNG AT HEART NO MATTER HOW OLD YOU GET.
BUT EVERYONE'S STORY BEGINS ONCE UPON A TIME...
...AND IT'S UP TO US TO CHERISH THE TIME WE'RE GIVEN TO ENSURE WE LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

"Once Upon a Time..."

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Shadowcat